

BUTTE-SILVER BOW

Clerk & Recorder

155 West Granite - Courthouse - Rm 208
Butte, Montana 59701

SENATE JUDICIARY

Exhibit No. 7

Date 4-3-07

Bill No. HB 281

MARY M. McMAHON
Clerk & Recorder

PAM GILMAN
Chief Deputy

**TESTIMONY PROVIDED BY: MARY M. McMAHON
BUTTE-SILVER BOW CLERK AND RECORDER
& ELECTION ADMINISTRATOR**

DATE: 4-3-07

**SUBJECT: HB 281 – CLOSING LATE REGISTRATION AT 5PM THE
FRIDAY
BEFORE THE ELECTION**

as amended
I support HB 281 allowing Montana's election administrators to close late voter registration at 5:PM the Friday before an election. I like – and I know a lot of other election administrators like – the late registration. We are not asking you to repeal it – all we're asking for is 17 hours...that's it...17 hours to help us continue ensuring the integrity of elections in all 56 MT counties.

The MT VOTES system has come a long way but it is by no means perfect. That integrity I mentioned could be at risk ~ possibly by an unscrupulous individual who might possess more than one set of IDs and they do have them. The sheer volume of activities on Election Day puts the process at risk.

FOR EXAMPLE, during Primary Election Day June 3, 2008, our offices must be open for normal business activities ~ recordations of normal business documents, for the issuance of birth and death records, research of land records, genealogy research, etc. When a normal business customer enters my office and sees 25-30 people standing in line to register and vote, it won't be a pretty picture.

We're told we'll just have to be provided more people, more money and more space. I don't know how long it has been since any of you has WORKED AN ELECTION – I don't mean campaigning or waiting for results – I mean worked side by side with your election

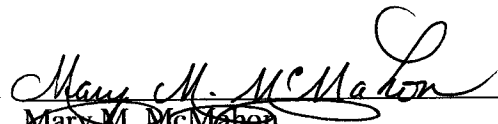


administrators during the weeks before, or the day and night of an election. But as for the additional people, money and space, I have to tell you there is none! We struggle as it is getting judges for our elections. The MT Code mandates that the political parties will provide us judges and I can tell you it doesn't happen in most of the 56 counties and it hasn't been so for a number of years. As for space – it's at a premium now and when every other office is open June 3, 2008, there will be no space to beg or borrow. The counties election budgets are stretched to the max now – there are no deep pockets for us.

Closing late registration at 5:PM on Friday before an election will allow us to run our registers over the weekend, ensuring a higher level of accuracy that the voters and you as candidates have a right to. *The registers will then be complete for Election Day*

FINALLY – what this all boils down to is for this legislative body to recognize the value of your enabling the election administrators of Montana to ensure the incorruptibility of the elections that each MT election administrator holds sacred. We differ in political philosophies and loyalties, but on this particular issue, we are 56 strong and united. I have no doubt that all 56 of us will work hard - starting today - to educate our non-registered voters about the value and importance of registering and voting each election. Seventeen hours may not sound like a lot to you...and it's not...BUT 17 those hours will go a long way ensuring the QUALITY & INTEGRITY as the principles of Montana elections.

Please vote "YES" on HB 281.


Mary M. McMahon
Clerk & Recorder ~ Election Administrator

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